

AGENDA: March 16, 2004

7.1

CATEGORY: Items Initiated by Council

DEPT.: City Council

TITLE: Valley Transportation Plan 2030—North
Cities Concerns

RECOMMENDATION

Authorize the Mayor to join with the other North County cities to send a letter to the Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) Board of Directors requesting North County projects be advanced in the Valley Transportation Plan 2030.

FISCAL IMPACT

This recommendation has no fiscal impact; however, if additional North County transportation projects are advanced in the Valley Transportation Plan 2030, funding could be made available earlier and additional transportation projects completed.

BACKGROUND AND ANALYSIS

The Valley Transportation Authority is in the process of updating the previously adopted Valley Transportation Plan 2020 to become the Valley Transportation Plan 2030 (VTP 2030) and the VTA Board of Directors held a workshop on February 27, 2004 to study the VTA staff recommendations.

The plan is a long-range blueprint for regional transit, highway, bicycle and pedestrian projects through the Year 2030. It is based on community input, demographic travel forecasts and financial projections. VTP 2030 goals, as stated in the VTA staff report (see Attachment 3), are to establish priorities that will:

- Improve the relationship between land use and transportation decisions.
- Upgrade regional roadways and strengthen and expand the transit system.
- Implement new technologies for transportation management.
- Improve conditions of local streets, bike routes and pedestrian facilities.

At the workshop, VTA staff presented recommendations for:

- The Measure A transit program priorities:
 - The first 25 years would include Downtown East Valley transit, BART and transit operating assistance. The recommended priorities are based on projected Measure A funds for MTC's 25-year Valley Transportation Plan (VTP 2030).
 - All other Measure A projects, except new rail corridors and Caltrain electrification would be in the 30-year but not the 25-year window. The recommended priorities are based on the VTP 2030 project list. Further study is required to determine whether any of the new rail corridors are funded with Measure A. Caltrain electrification is excluded because San Mateo and San Francisco Counties have not allocated funds to this project.
 - New rail corridors and Caltrain electrification would not be included.
- Bonding costs for BART were not included. Any bonding would cause additional projects to fall off the list.
- In addition, the sales tax forecast of 41 percent growth over five years may be overly optimistic. If sales tax growth is lower, additional projects would have to be cut.
- Strategies for selecting priorities for the following programs:
 - Highway.
 - Expressway.
 - Local streets and roads.
 - Transportation systems operations and management.
 - Sound barriers.
 - Pavement management.
 - Bicycles.

Additionally, included in the VTA staff report are the Board-adopted evaluation criteria for each project category.

The Transportation and Land Use Coalition, during public comment, showed an analysis with bonding costs (Attachment 2). All non-light rail projects, including BART, were below the line and unfundable. This is consistent with the November 2003 analysis of Scott Buhrer, then the VTA chief financial officer.

Following the workshop, the North County cities (Santa Clara, Sunnyvale, Palo Alto, Los Altos, Los Altos Hills and Mountain View) representatives met. There was significant concern that, after inclusion of bonding costs, there would not be money for any non-BART projects. The group noted the VTP 2030 travel forecasts showed the largest increase in travel demand in the northern area of the County. However, projects important to the needs of our area are not included for funding. As a result of concerns expressed by some members, particularly about the transit priorities and scoring criteria, the group is requesting a letter (see Attachment 1), signed by all North County cities, be sent to the VTA Board of Directors requesting several projects be advanced to within the 25-year VTP 2030 and that a reasonable fraction be implemented within the expenditure plan for the next 10 years, including:

- Bus rapid transit (\$33 million).
- Caltrain service upgrades (\$155 million).
- Dumbarton rail (\$44 million).
- Caltrain electrification (\$233 million).
- Palo Alto intermodal center (\$50 million).

Regarding the evaluation criteria, the representatives felt VTA's financial outlook had changed since 2001 when the board adopted it, and are requesting the following:

1. Criteria be developed that measures cost-effectiveness of each project under consideration (e.g., cost/rider versus increasing ridership regardless of cost).
2. VTA assign more than 5 points out of 100 points to "reasonable assurance of funding."

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PUBLIC NOTICING—Agenda posting.

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Attachments: 1. Letter
2. Transportation and Land Use Coalition Bonding Cost Analysis
3. VTA Staff Report